

Integrative Strategies Forum

Thank you, Chair, ladies and gentlemen.

First and foremost, I want to first thank the original spirits and people of these lands, for this beautiful day and allowing us to gather here this week.

My name is Frankie Orona, my traditional name is Che-u cha-wat ha-tako, I am Tongva and Chumash from California and Borrado from Texas.

Moving forward, this assembly must strive to make future negotiations more equitable and inclusive to Indigenous peoples, frontline communities, waste pickers, and the youth of our next generation.

As those who suffered generations of injustice and the worst impacts of plastic pollution, we cannot be forgotten or treated as an afterthought.

The rates of chronic respiratory illness and cancer in our communities are 3 to 5 times higher than the national average in the US. The chemicals used during the production of plastics are destroying communities that industry and enabling governments have deemed sacrifice zones.

This assembly has a mandate to confront plastics pollution across the full life cycle.

99% of plastics are made from fossil fuels which means we have a responsibility to examine the impacts of extraction, petrochemical refinement, manufacturing, and consumption in addition to the waste accumulating in all environments.

We have evidence of microplastics in everything from tap water to table salt, to human lung tissue, breast milk and cord blood.

We must not forget that we are the air. We are the water. We are the land. We are not separate from the environment. We *are* the environment.

Without a strong, legally binding global instrument, we are all at risk of becoming vehicles of toxic plastic pollution, whether we live in a sacrifice zone or not.

As original peoples of the land, we have an inherent right to protect the environment, our land, our air, our water and all creation. As human beings, we all have a responsibility to do our part and take care of Mother Earth, but it is imperative that this assembly hold the fossil fuel and petrochemical industries accountable for the plastic pollution crisis.

A treaty that fails to do this and neglects the demands of communities most impacted by the plastic pollution crisis will be a treaty destined to fail.

As these negotiations unfold, we implore this assembly to address the intergenerational harms of fossil fuel extraction, plastic production, consumption and waste, while prioritizing public health and human rights for all.

The majority of the plastic pollution was created in the last thirty years. We need a just transition away from plastics and the addiction of convenience that is destroying frontline communities around the world.

Thank you

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J. Alejandra Riano Guzman

During this week we have spent time discussing the detrimental impacts of plastics in both human health and the environment. But we have spent even more time discussing things of no relevance to tackle the true scale of plastic pollution. Just today, the UN general secretary acknowledged that plastics are fossil fuels in another form, and pose a serious threat to human rights, the climate and biodiversity.

What we still haven't mentioned is the devastating loss of ancestral, traditional and cultural heritage and knowledge caused by plastics as an extension of colonialism. The plastic industry has systemically replaced traditional zero waste, reuse and refill systems that existed at the core of our values and cultures by creating and forcing upon us a dependence on plastics. The plastic crisis is not only directly connected to the climate crisis and to biodiversity loss. It is also connected to social inequities, systemic racism, systemic erasure and waste colonialism. In that sense plastics are so much more than a danger to our health and the health of the environment. They are a danger to our cultural diversity and to our ancestral traditional systems. Systems that during millennia operated in alignment and balance with the environment.

That's why in terms of sequencing, we feel it is important to acknowledge the contribution of our community at each stage of the negotiations.

I believe there is a serious conflict of interests having the industry being part of the negotiations. So I invite the communities most affected by this crisis, including those within the United States, to continue to hold industry accountable and to not let them distract you with false solutions that will only perpetuate cultural erasure and environmental injustices.

There's no place for toxic plastics or bioplastics in a truly circular economy. In order to achieve systemic transformation through a truly circular economy, we must reclaim, protect and promote traditional and ancestral systems. The knowledge of our communities will be crucial in the mitigation of the triple crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and plastic pollution.

J. Alejandra Riano Guzman

INC-1 Global Plastics Treaty Intervention on Chemical Recycling

Integrated Strategies Forum

December 1, 2022

As part of the many environmental justice delegates¹ present at the first negotiating committee for the United Nations Global Plastics Treaty, we represent communities and environments directly affected by the entire lifecycle of plastic pollution: extraction, refining, creation, use and wastage. Our communities are mostly black, brown, indigenous, and poor communities. We have experiential knowledge of human rights violations and direct health effects of plastic pollution.

This intervention addresses the issues in waste management of plastics, specifically incineration and chemical recycling. Chemical recycling using pyrolysis, gasification, incineration, and waste to energy sacrifices human health and common-sense environmental protections for the benefit of industry profits. **These facilities should be nationally and globally regulated as incinerators and our regulatory agencies need to be better at addressing the ongoing pollution issues of facilities in the entire waste sector.**

Chemical recycling industries and technology that heat plastics to make fuel do not solve our plastic problem. Facilities like these require us to keep making plastics to use as fuel which directly harm reduction efforts to recycle, reduce, reuse and refuse. Many of the countries negotiating the United Nations Global Plastic Treaty already recognize that chemical recycling is not permitted in the process to address plastic pollution as it causes more harm to our air quality and there is not enough air emissions control and regulation.

As policy makers push industry to move away from fossil fuels and plastic, the future of the plastic-to-fuel industry is at best questionable and at most, a dangerous distraction from addressing the root cause of the world's plastic waste crisis. The plastic "chemical

¹<https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/2022/12/01/bffp-us-ej-delegation-statement-on-the-global-plastics-treaty-inc-1-negotiations/>

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recycling” industry has struggled with decades of technological difficulties; poses an unnecessary risk to the environment and public health; and poses a financially risky future that is incompatible with a climate safe future and circular economy. **A report from Reuters in 2021 found that only about 20% of proposed facilities are operational, with the majority shutting down or being canceled despite tens of millions of dollars in funding.**²

These facilities use incineration processes to break down plastic waste. Research from GAIA confirms that these facilities are in actuality waste-to-toxic oil plants, processing plastic to turn it into a polluting fuel that creates heavy pollution and distressing health issues in nearby communities like mine. **In 2022, Natural Resources Defense Council found that most of these facilities “are not recycling any plastic; generate large quantities of hazardous waste; and release hazardous air pollutants.”**³

The NRDC states that pyrolysis and gasification release chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, neurological damage, or other serious health effects like birth defects – and most are cited in communities that are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and low-income.

No matter our race, income, or geological location, government regulators are tasked with protecting the health of all residents. I close by urging the member states of this treaty to oppose chemical recycling, pyrolysis, gasification, incineration, and waste to energy, and **place the human rights to health and wellbeing of communities above the profits of the plastics industry.**

Thank you for your attention.

² <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/environment-plastic-oil-recycling>

³ NRDC. RECYCLING LIES: “CHEMICAL RECYCLING” OF PLASTIC IS JUST GREENWASHING INCINERATION. 2022. <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/chemical-recycling-greenwashing-incineration-ib.pdf>